

## CONCEPT NOTE

### **THE RAINFOREST CHALLENGE: FORESTS AS RESOURCES FOR THE POOR**

**THE CHALLENGE** arises from two persistent, interlinked problems of overwhelming importance. Rural poverty in the tropics is one. The other is continuing loss of unique habitats and the natural resource degradation that accompany rainforest conversion. It is futile to attempt to conserve forests in developing countries without addressing local people's needs. Forests and forest lands must be managed as a resource for the poor with the objective of attaining a multi-functional landscape yielding a range of goods and services. Without an effective conservation strategy, productivity growth on forest-derived land can accelerate deforestation pressure even as it expands livelihood options and reduces poverty. These problems are dauntingly complex: the search for solutions must be linked to attain a workable mix of conservation and development at a large spatial scale.

**THE OPPORTUNITY** is to enhance the productivity, sustainability and diversity of livelihood options available to poor people in degraded forest and woodland landscapes.

**1. Program objectives in relation to the CGIAR goal and mission.** This Challenge Program (CP) will be designed to bridge three major gaps that lie at the heart of the CGIAR's mission of sustainable agricultural development based on the environmentally sound management of natural resources. **Bridging the gap between efforts of conservation and development organizations**, both internationally and within developing countries, is the defining feature of this proposal. This gap has narrowed, and the emerging prospect for breakthroughs from joint effort combining expertise in nature conservation with expertise in tropical agriculture and natural resource management is the core concept underlying the CP.

The initial focus of learning and action will be the Tropical and Subtropical Moist Broadleaf Forest Biome, one of the Global 200 Priority Ecoregions of the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF). The Amazon; the forest zones of West and Central Africa and of montane Mainland Southeast Asia; and Sumatra, Borneo, and Mindanao in Insular Southeast Asia are some of the major units within this biome. Ultimately, the CP will address conservation-development problems over a range of forest ecosystems, generating lessons that are broadly applicable to natural resource management in the tropics.

**Another gap to bridge is between science and policy**, specifically the need for scientific information on environment-development relationships that is useable and relevant to policymaking and to testing of superior conservation and development strategies. For example, little is known about the links among globally-important biodiversity, local production sustainability, and livelihoods of poor people. Moreover, there is little experience and understanding of workable interventions, which typically require development of integrated technological, institutional and policy innovations. This program will add significantly to knowledge of such links and interventions and will feed this information into adaptive management and policymaking processes. This program also will contribute to better public understanding of these problems and opportunities.

Capacity building and collaboration are needed to **bridge the gap between 'north' and 'south', both in the incidence of costs and benefits but also in capacity to participate in the search for solutions.** The benefits of rainforest conservation are global, but costs of conservation are concentrated in the tropics. Capacity of many developing country organizations to participate in development of workable interventions is constrained by relatively poor access to information and funding. There is great demand among stakeholders in the tropics for capacity building that will

enable them to rise to the unconventional challenges they now face in balancing environment and development objectives.

This is *a global challenge* to save (and use) biodiversity, which is an issue of growing concern to people everywhere. Structure and function of these forests are similar across the tropics, but there is spectacular variation in species composition, even across small distances. In a class by themselves as the richest terrestrial vegetation by far, conversion of these forests leads to the greatest species loss per unit area of any land cover change. Figures are extremely controversial, but there is no evidence that conversion slowed during the past decade, with an average of at least 13 million ha of natural forest habitat lost annually in the tropics.

This equally is *a human development challenge*, symptomatic of the poverty, insecurity, lack of political voice, and limited livelihood options experienced by billions in the developing world. More than 500 million people live within the tropical forest biome. Most are poor households directly dependent on forest resources and agriculture for their livelihoods. Other poor households suffer indirectly from waste of these resources and environmental degradation. Of course, the rural poor are not the only ones clearing rainforests. Many actors – government agencies and private companies, large as well as small-scale farmers, rich as well as poor – convert forests to other uses; the rich and powerful are among the main beneficiaries of policies that waste forest resources. Policy and institutional reform to improve management and equitable access to natural resources is a necessary step with high potential social payoffs, but, practically and ethically, the eradication of poverty is fundamental to a sustainable approach to the Rainforest Challenge.

This is *an integrated natural resource management challenge* spanning forest ecosystems, forest-derived agroecosystems, and the complex landscape mosaics in between. There are large-scale resource management problems within these forest-derived agroecosystems. Examples include the tens of millions of hectares of tropical grasslands infested with invasive weeds in Southeast Asia, and a comparable area of degrading and dying pastures in the Amazon.

Landscape restoration and reversal of resource degradation are key opportunities to expand production and fight poverty without accelerating deforestation, if combined with effective forest conservation strategies. *Sustainable productivity growth and resource use are central to this concept*. Although the countries concerned have vastly different social, political and economic circumstances, the tropical forest biome has many common biophysical features and patterns (climate, light incidence, soil groups and fertility problems, carbon stocks, and hydrology). There also is a shared legacy of neglect of smallholder production systems. Taken together, these unifying features produce a distinctive combination of opportunities for sustainable productivity growth and challenges for natural resource management.

*This challenge cuts across all the major thrusts of the CGIAR* -- increasing productivity and sustainability, saving biodiversity, improving policies, and strengthening national partners. However, the challenge also *goes beyond the capacity and expertise of the CGIAR and its conventional partners*. Thus it is an *organizational challenge* that must be built on new, mutually-beneficial partnerships and on active learning to enhance efficiency of collaborative links. In this aspect, as with other components of the challenge, the program has great potential to yield international public goods, particularly since specific provisions will be made to distil the strategic lessons of the active learning process that will be required.

**2. Outputs and impacts.** A network of sites (initially 8-12) will be developed where approaches to integrating conservation and development will be tested at the scale of coherent intermediate sized administrative and landscape units. These will be areas where large numbers of poor people's livelihoods depend significantly on the restoration or maintenance of forests and woodlands as part of a multi-functional agricultural landscape. A learning network will be established to link the sites and generate improved understanding of how local resource management can be

reconciled with maintenance of environmental services. Over time, an expanding network will translate results into broad-based conservation and development impacts.

### **Outputs:**

1. Improved management systems for forest – agriculture mosaics.
2. Options and mechanisms for poor people to be compensated for environmental services (biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and hydrological functions).
3. Models and options for the reconfiguration of relationships between research providers (NARS, ARIs, NGOs and IARCs) and resource managers (farmers, foresters, fishers etc) to improve capacity to manage natural resources in an integrated and adaptive manner.

### **Impacts:**

1. Widespread adoption and adaptation of enhanced production and income earning opportunities for the rural poor based on sustainable use of biological resources and management of forests, soils, and water.
2. Significant and tangible benefits for the rural poor that clearly are linked to (and derive from) biodiversity conservation, carbon storage and watershed management.
3. The local, national, regional and global environmental benefits resulting from (2) above. These environmental benefits have been elusive, in large part because many conservation projects attempt to evict poor people or to restrict their uses of land and forest resources. Ignoring the costs the rural poor bear in foregone livelihood and development opportunities is a fundamental reason why so many conservation projects fail.
4. Improved institutional capacity and performance achieved through synergies between sector-based institutions and improved accountability to local stakeholders.

**3. Generation of the concept.** This CP concept represents the confluence of several distinct initiatives. The concept crystallized in November 2001, when the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) – contacted two Future Harvest centres (CIFOR and ICRAF) with a proposal for collaboration. The impetus for that contact arises from a major new WWF/IUCN initiative on Forest Landscape Restoration, which is one of three targets of WWF's Forests for Life Program and is prominent among the "key results areas" approved by IUCN's General Assembly in late 2000. WWF and IUCN have made strong commitments to restoration and management of degraded and fragmented landscapes as a key element of their strategies to conserve biodiversity. This is a major policy shift for organizations that traditionally focussed on nature conservation in protected areas.

Earlier in November 2001, the Global Steering Group of the Alternatives to Slash-and-Burn (ASB) systemwide program decided unanimously during its annual meeting to investigate prospects for enhancing strategic partnerships and impact through a CP. The Global Steering Group is ASB's governing body, comprising a balanced representation of NARS (Brazil's Embrapa, Cameroon's IRAD, Indonesia's AARD, Peru's INIA, the Philippines' PCARRD, and Thailand's Royal Forest Department), and international centres (CIAT, CIFOR, ICRAF, IFPRI, IITA, and TSBF).

A number of partners involved in this concept -- including both Embrapa and CIAT -- also have been active in development of the Amazon Initiative. The concepts differ in scope, but there are clear connections between them in a number of dimensions. Thus, there would appear to be great scope to

explore innovative linkages between eco-regional initiatives – such as the Amazon Initiative -- and this proposed challenge programme.

The proposed CP responds to the decision of the Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity to adopt Ecosystem Approaches and conforms to the GEF Operational Programme 12 on Ecosystem Approaches. The work of the CGIAR Centre Director's Committee Task Force on Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM) has also inspired the approach that is proposed. The potential partners, including many who are already active in the INRM Task Force, have made seminal contributions to the evolving INRM paradigm. But it also is well recognized among these partners that the provision of more and better information alone is not enough to create effective responses to this challenge. Partnership with the world's largest and most experienced independent conservation organizations, IUCN and WWF, broadens the scope of activities substantially and adds the key missing ingredient of expertise in nature conservation, outreach and political influence necessary for a Rainforest Challenge Program.

#### **4. Potential partners** (please see attached list for details)

- the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and its worldwide membership network
- the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF), with its national organizations and programs in many developing countries and an extensive network of field projects
- the Amazon Initiative led by Embrapa and CIAT
- the Alternatives to Slash-and-Burn Systemwide Program hosted by ICRAF
- the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) hosted by ICLARM
- 20 other advanced research institutions and international organizations
- national systems and their national nature conservation counterparts in at least 6 countries (Brazil, Cameroon, Indonesia, Peru, the Philippines, and Thailand)
- at least 10 local and national NGOs and 20 other national agencies and universities in developing countries from the outset, with significant expansion over time
- at least 4 Future Harvest centres (CIAT, CIFOR, ICRAF, IITA)

**5. Funding requirements.** It is anticipated that this CP would steadily increase activity from USD 3-5 million in its first year to USD 15-20 million per year by its fourth year. The duration of the CP would be 7-10 years, with an evaluation anticipated in the period 2010-2013.

The leading role of IUCN and WWF sharply enhances prospects to raise significant additional funds from sources that have not previously supported CGIAR activities. IUCN and WWF expect to mobilize significant resources for the CP from environmental agencies and private sources and already have established fundraising targets for the program.

**6. Allocation of funding.** CP funds will be allocated by a global steering group (GSG), composed of a subset of representatives of the IUCN and WWF and the most active Future Harvest centres, national and international partners. The GSG will allocate sufficient funds for coordination of the nested structure and for the federative 'glue' to link the program activities across levels and sites. The bulk of CP funds will be for research, development, capacity building, and information dissemination activities at and among the growing network of sites. Competitive grants to partners administered under the auspices of the GSG will be the primary mechanism for allocation of CP funds.

**7. Governance and coordination.** The proposed CP will be constituted as an independent, multilevel, international consortium. The principal of subsidiarity will be applied in this shared leadership structure. The CP will be governed by a global steering group (GSG), comprising a balance of representatives from national and international partner institutions. Makeup of the GSG and agreement on the initial sites will be based on consultation among partners during the development of the full CP proposal. Once constituted, the GSG will identify the host for a small global coordination

office and a chairperson for the GSG. A lead agency and local steering committee (LSC) composed of representatives of the participating groups will be established at each location.